

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 3425

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, MILI, IT
SUBJECT: DEFENSE MINISTER RUFFINI'S VIEWS ON POLITICAL CRISIS

1. DURING MY CALL ON DEFENSE MINISTER RUFFINI (FEBRUARY 22) HE OFFERED HIS PERSPECTIVE ON THE CURRENT POLITICAL CRISIS. THE POLITICAL SITUATION HE SAID IS STILL PRETTY MUCH "IN ALTO MARE" (ON THE HIGH SEAS). THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS ARE ATTEMPTING TO FINESSE THE POLITICAL ISSUES AND ESTABLISH A PROGRAM THAT WILL "BACK THE PCI TO THE WALL." THE PROGRAM-MATIC SOLUTION TO THE CRISIS WILL ONLY WORK IF THE PCI CAN BE MADE CO-RESPONSIBLE FOR A PROGRAM THAT SERVES TO MEET THE FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEMS OF THE COUNTRY. THE PROGRAM CONTAINS A FEW ELEMENTS BUT EACH CALLS FOR HARD DECISIONS AND SOME REAL SACRIFICE--BY ALL ITALIANS. IF THE PCI CAN ACCEPT THE PROGRAM PROPOSED, "IT WILL PUT THE COMMUNISTS IN A POSITION IN WHICH THEIR INNER CONTRADICTIONS WILL EMERGE." IT MUST BE CLEAR, HOWEVER, THAT ANY ACCORD WITH THE PCI IS PROGRAMMATIC AND NOT A POLITICAL ALLIANCE OR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A POLITICAL MAJORITY. "THE MARGIN FOR MANEUVER IS VERY LIMITED," RUFFINI OBSERVED.

2. AT A DC MEETING ON FEBRUARY 21, FORLANI HAD REMARKED THAT THE PCI HAD ALREADY SUCCEEDED IN ENLARGING LAST JULY'S PROGRAMMATIC ACCORD TO INCLUDE FOREIGN AFFAIRS. RUFFINI
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SAID THAT HE INTERRUPTED THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S STATEMENT TO NOTE THAT THE PCI HAD EXPRESSED A PRO-NATO VIEW ONLY IN THE ABSTRACT. IT WAS TIME TO GET DOWN TO THE BOTTOM LINE. SO FAR, THE PCI HAS BEEN CLEARLY OPPOSED TO A NUMBER OF IMPORTANT NATO PROGRAMS AND PROPOSALS, AWACS, THE N-BOMB, ETC. DURING THE OCTOBER-NOVEMBER DEBATE IN THE PARLIAMENT THE PCI HAD ASKED FOR FURTHER REDUCTIONS IN THE ITALIAN

DEFENSE BUDGET.

3. I ASKED RUFFINI WHETHER HE THOUGHT A SOLUTION TO THE CRISIS WAS IN PROSPECT. HE REPLIED THAT HE WAS ON BALANCE PESSIMISTIC. A SOLUTION SEEMS POSSIBLE ONLY IF THE DC MAKES CONCESSIONS ON ISSUES OF THE ECONOMY AND PUBLIC ORDER WHICH IT CANNOT MAKE. THE DC PROGRAM OFFER MUST BE A RIGID ONE ON PRINCIPLE.

4. RUFFINI ASSERTED HE WAS PERSONALLY OPPOSED TO THE IDEA OF THE PCI SIGNING A MOTION OF CONFIDENCE IN THE PARLIAMENT ALONG WITH THE OTHER PARTIES. IN ITSELF THE ACT WAS NOT REALLY OF GREATER SUBSTANCE THAN A SIMPLE VOTE OF CONFIDENCE. BUT THERE WAS HE ADMITTED AN IMPORTANT PSYCHOLOGICAL DIFFERENCE. TO ITALIAN PUBLIC OPINION IT WOULD LOOK LIKE A POLITICAL ACCORD.

5. I ASKED RUFFINI HOW HE SAW THE EVOLUTION OF EVENTS SHOULD ANDREOTTI'S BID FAIL. RUFFINI SUGGESTED THE FOLLOWING SCENARIO: ANDREOTTI FAILS TO REACH AN AGREED SOLUTION; THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC WILL ASK A LAY PARTY HEAD (PROBABLY LA MALFA) TO ATTEMPT TO FORM A GOVERNMENT; LA MALFA WOULD FAIL (AS EXPECTED) AND REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT THAT THE ONLY REMAINING OPTION WAS THE FORMATION OF A GOVERNMENT "ABOVE PARTIES" (THAT IS A TECHNICAL, NON-POLITICAL GOVERNMENT); FANFANI
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IS ASKED TO FORM SUCH A GOVERNMENT. THAT SCENARIO IN RUFFINI'S VIEW WOULD REPRESENT A FRIGHTENING ADVANCE OF THE PCI. IT IS, HE SAID, WHAT THE PCI WANTS. ALL THE SEMANTIC FIG LEAFS COULD NOT DISGUISE WHAT IT IS. ALTHOUGH THE PCI PREFERS THE FANFANI SOLUTION, IT WAS OBVIOUS SAID RUFFINI THAT ANDREOTTI OFFERED A FAR BETTER ONE. FANFANI WAS DANGEROUS. (NOTE: RUFFINI IS A DOROTEO, BUT AN EX-FANFANIANO). FANFANI WAS TOO AMBITIOUS AND DRIVEN BY A HIGHLY AMBITIOUS WIFE.

6. ELECTIONS ARE NO SOLUTION SAID RUFFINI. HE REPEATED BY NOW WELL KNOWN POLITICAL OBJECTIONS TO ELECTIONS WE HAVE HEARD FROM MANY OTHERS; ELECTIONS WILL MEAN THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE SMALL LAY PARTIES; THE DC WOULD IMPROVE ITS SHARE OF THE VOETE TO AS MUCH AS 43-44 PERCENT AS INDICATED BY A NUMBER OF POLLS; THE PCI SHARE WOULD PROBABLY ALSO GROW SOMEWHAT. THE END RESULT WOULD BE A SITUATION WORSE THAN THE PRESENT. THE DC WOULD BE SUCCESSFUL IN ATTRACTING VOTERS (FI IT CAMPAIGNED PROPERLY) BUT IT WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO GOVERN THE COUNTRY WITHOUT THE HELP OF THE PCI. HE FEARED,

SAID RUFFINI, THAT THE PCI'S REAL GOAL WAS ELECTIONS.
FOR ONE THING, HE SUGGESTED, A RESORT TO THE BALLOT
BOX WOULD AVOID THE COMING PSI CONGRESS. THAT CONGRESS
RUFFINI THOUGHT, COULD BE USEFUL TO THE DC AS IT
OFFERED AT LEAST AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE PSI TO PULL
ITSELF TOGETHER AND FALL INTO LINE WITH ITS SISTER
SOCIALIST PARTIES IN THE REST OF EUROPE.

7. SOMEWHAT WISTFULLY, AT ONE POINT RUFFINI OBSERVED
THAT ONE OF THE GREAT FAULTS OF THE DC WAS A LACK
OF COURAGE. THE PCI'S PAJETTA, HE SAID, COULD WRITE
A SPIRITED APPROVAL OF THE USSR'S ROLE IN THE CONFLICT
ON THE HORN OF AFRICA. IF, HOWEVER, THE SITUATION
WERE REVERSED AND THE U.S. WERE AN ACTIVE PARTICIPANT
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IN THE STRUGGLE, WE COULD BE SURE THAT NO DC
POLITICAN WOULD DEFEND OUR PRESENCE THERE.GARDNER

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